

Deacon Tom Coyle's Homily

Seventh Sunday of Easter and the Solemnity of the Ascension

May 16, 2021

OUR CELEBRATION TODAY OF THE Seventh Sunday of Easter is sandwiched between two of the Church's major feasts: Ascension Thursday and next Sunday is Pentecost.

THE OPENING ANTIPHON FOR THE Feast of the Ascension is one of the most beautiful pieces of Gregorian chant in the Church's repertoire. It is the advice given by the two angels dressed in white to the Apostles just after Jesus has ascended into heaven.

IT ALWAYS STRUCK ME AS IRONIC that such magnificent music is used here when the angels are actually yelling at the Apostles, chiding them. The angels say: "Men of Galilee, why are you still standing there looking up at the sky?"

THE IMPLICATION BEING: YOU'VE been given a mandate by Jesus, a mission to obey. He told you to 'Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News.' Now go do it! Get a move on! Go!"

OUR FIRST READING TODAY FROM the Acts of the Apostles shows us the group of Christians called the "holy ones." These men and women, together with Mary the Mother of Jesus, begin the task of moving on by the painful ordeal of replacing Judas with Matthias.

ALL OF US HERE TODAY ARE THE "holy ones" together with all the followers of Christ throughout the world. Four times in our second reading, four times! St. John tells us that God remains in us. John says that God's Love is brought to perfection in us!

JESUS' FINAL COMMAND TO THE Apostles at His Ascension is addressed to each one of us as well, the new "holy ones": "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News." But, just what is the Good News? Well, we can begin with, "The Lord is risen!" and follow that with the saving Love of God made manifest in Jesus.

POPE FRANCIS TELLS US: "WE cannot passively and calmly wait in our church buildings. But," the Pope asks, "To whom should we go first?" He tells us: "Above all, go to the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked." Pope Francis goes on: "I do not want a Church caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures while at our door people are starving."

OK. BUT, WE ASK, "GOING INTO THE whole world?" – what, are we supposed to go to Calcutta ourselves? LISTEN TO BLESSED MOTHER Teresa's answer to that. "Stay where you are," she says, "Find your own Calcutta. Find the sick, the suffering, and the lonely right there where you are – in your own homes and in your own families, in your workplaces and in your schools."

IT IS OUR JOB TO BE THE "HOLY ones" and we'll find that we are proclaiming the Good News simply by the way we live our day-to-day life.

PICTURE THESE SAME TWO ANGELS dressed in white from the Ascension saying to us right now, to you and to me: "Dear People of St. Thomas the Apostle, why are you still looking up into the sky? Why are you just sitting there in your pews? Get moving. Go out into the world and proclaim the Good News by the way you are living your lives!"